DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 514 CG 018 671

AUTHOR Russell, Ruth V.
TITLE Correlates of Life Satisfaction in Retirement.
PUB DATE Nov 85
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the Annual Scientific Meeting of the Gerontological Society (38th, New Orleans, LA, November 22-26, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Leisure Time; *Life Satisfaction; *Motivation; Older Adults; Participant Satisfaction; *Perception; *Personal Autonomy; Predictor Variables; Recreational Activities; *Retirement; Sex Differences

ABSTRACT

Gerontological studies have found that satisfaction with life is greater among those who are still employed. To determine what contributes to a meaningful life when employment is no longer the person's dominant life theme, time-budget instrumentation was used with 130 residents of residential retirement centers in Indiana. Subjects completed measures of perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling in the individual's daily life. Subjects also responded to a single question on how satisfied they were with their current lives. Life circumstance variables assessed included gender, age, marital status, annual income, self-rated health, religiosity, retirement choice, mobility, leisure activity participation, and leisure satisfaction. The majority of subjects reported being either extremely satisfied (26 percent) or quite satisfied (43 percent) with their current lives. The results indicated that life satisfaction in retirement was greater for persons who reported more perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling experienced in their daily lives. Other findings revealed that gender, income, and leisure satisfaction were significant correlates of satisfaction with retirement life. Females with higher incomes and with higher levels of satisfaction in their leisure pursuits were the most satisfied with retirement life. Future research should consider the objective circumstances surrounding retirees, retirees' perceptions of themselves and of their circumstances, and the socialization history of each individual. (NRB)

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CORRELATES OF LIFE SATISFACTION IN RETIREMENT

Ruth V. Russell
Department of Recreation
and Park Administration
HPER 133
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

CG 018 671

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CORRELATES OF LIFE SATISFACTION IN RETIREMENT.

R.V. Russell. Recreation and Park Adm. Dept., 133 HPER, Indiana Univ., Bloomington, IN 47405

The real possibility exists that larger proportions of people in our society will spend an even larger proportion of their time without employment. Retirement is a social, economic, political, and psychological event that is increasing exponentially. Yet, it is still generally viewed as a negative event. Using primarily time-budget instrumentation with 130 male and female residents of retirement residential centers, this study refuted this common view. By measuring the multiple variables of the amount of 1) perceived freedom, 2) instrinsic motivation, and 3) positive feeling in their daily lives, these subjects were considered to be quite satisfied with their retirement experience. Accounting for the major sources of this satisfaction were gender, income, and amount of satisfaction with leisure expressions. Females, with higher incomes, and with higher levels of satisfaction in their leisure pursuits were profiles more associated with retirement satisfaction. This study joins an already considerable collection of basic research on "What is successful retirement?" In contrast, however, this study found that life satisfaction in retirement is composed of the amount of perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling experienced in daily life. The more of these attitudes found in a retiree's life, the more satisfied they were with that life. Implications from the study may be drawn for pre-retirement education, personal life style planning, and leisure service delivery systems.

CORRELATES OF LIFE SATISFACTION IN RETIREMENT

Ruth V. Russell
Indiana University

The ability to adjust to the changes that retirement usually brings has been central to the theoretical and empirical development of social gerontology over recent years. Overall, satisfaction with life has been found to be greater among those who are still employed.

The purpose of this investigation was to determine what contributes to a meaningful life when employment is no longer the person's dominant life theme. As an increasing proportion of persons both voluntarily and manditorily retire, the quality of their projected 20 to 30 remaining years is of increasing importance to both basic and applied research -- as well as to service delivery.

This study investigated the extent to which retirement is a satisfying life experience. It was specifically attentive to 1) determining the appropriateness of studying quality of retirement life as the amount of perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling experienced in daily life, 2) determining the relationship of specific circumstances of life and retirement satisfaction, and 3) determining the role of leisure activity participation and satisfaction with leisure in retirement satisfaction.

Procedures and Results

The sample (N=130) was drawn from residents of retirement residential centers in Indiana. It included both males and females between the ages of 60 and 94. The sample did not include institutionalized persons.

In order to address the first research problem two assessments were used. The quality of the retiree's life was assessed using a modified version of Neulinger's (1977) questionnaire "A Self-Exploration: What Am I Doing? (WAID)". The WAID is a time-budget instrument that provided self-reported levels of perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling in the respondent's 24 hour day. As a way of validating the ability of the WAID to assess retirement satisfaction, a single 7-response options question was also used. Subjects were asked to rate overall how satisfied they were with their current lives. Twenty six percent indicated that they were "extremely satisfied" and 43 percent indicated that they were "quite satisfied". Slightly over 31 percent (R^2 = .310) of this variance could be explained by the variance in the factors of perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling.

In the second research problem the WAID, a life circumstances questionnaire, McKechnie's (1975) Leisure Activities Blank (LAB), and the Leisure Satisfaction Scale (LSS) developed by Beard and Ragheb (1980) were the instrumentation utilized. The life circumstances variables assessed were gender, age, marital status, annual income, self-rated health, religiosity, retirement choice, mobility, leisure activity participation, and leisure satisfaction. The relationship between retirement satisfaction and specific life circumstances was determined with canonical correlation analysis. According to the single significant canonical solution there was a relationship between these two sets of variables. Accounting for the major sources of the relationship were gender, income, and leisure satisfaction with intrinsic motivation and positive feeling. In spite of this significant relationship the life circumstances variables set accounted for

only 11.7 percent of the variation in the retirement satisfaction variable set.

The third research problem in this study was further determination of the unique roles of leisure activity participation and leisure satisfaction in retirement life satisfaction. The data from the WAID, LAB, and LSS were used in this analysis. The overall mean for participation in leisure activities was "seldom" (2.0 on a 1 to 5 rating scale). On the other hand, subjects reported a higher overall mean for satisfaction with leisure (3.5 on a 1 to 5 rating scale). Leisure offered a particular source for relaxational, social, and aesthetic satisfactions.

In order to assess the combined relationship for leisure participation and leisure satisfaction with retirement satisfaction a canonical correlation analysis was used. The results indicated one significantsolution between these variable sets, withleisure satisfaction and intrinsic motivation accounting for a significant source of the relationship. In order to further verify the individual roles of leisure participation and leisure satisfaction in retirement satisfaction, the three components of retirement satisfaction were combined into one variable and partial correlation analyses were performed. The partial correlation between leisure activity participation and retirement satisfaction (with the effects of the other life circumstances variables removed) was not significant. The partial correlation between leisure satisfaction and retirement satisfaction (with the effects of the other life circumstances variables removed) was significant.

Discussion

The study found that life satisfaction in retirement is composed of the amount of perceived freedom, intrinsic motivation, and positive feeling experienced in daily living. The more of these components found in a retiree's life, the more satisfied they were with that life. The respondents in this study were quite satisfied with their retirement lives. The study further found that gender, income, and leisure satisfaction were significant correlates of satisfaction with retirement life. Females, with higher incomes, and with higher levels of satisfaction in their leisure pursuits were subject profiles more associated with retirement satisfaction.

The findings of this study and the literature on life satisfaction in retirement are not completely mutually supportive. Even though research has found it difficult to determine the precise effect of retirement on satisfaction with life the theoretical writings and data based studies in the literature depended on the premise that retirement has a negative effect on personal adjustment. Maladjustment was not the typical response in this study. Disagreements were also found with the literature in terms of which life circumstance factors are important to retirement satisfaction and the role of participation in leisure activity. The differences between the findings of this study and those reported in the literature are perhaps due to differences in statistical treatment. This study's use of canonical correlation enabled a consideration of the dependent variable of retirement satisfaction as a set of three measured variables, rather than one. The technique also enabled the life circumstances variables to be analyzed as a set of variables.

Taken together as a set these variables had to, in essence, compete with each other in the determination of importance.

When contemplated in light of previous research this study seems to argue there is no clear evidence that retirement tends to make people unhappy or dissatisfied with life. It has more to do with the attitude with which the retiree's daily life is approached. Clearly what this suggests is a need for longitudinal research based on an interactionist theory of retirement. Such research would need to consider the objective circumstances surrounding the retired person, their perceptions of themselves and these circumstances, and the socialization history of each individual.

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